



# Generations on the Land

## The Rossmans' Preserved Century Farm

**S**hirley Rossman's whole life has unfolded among the house and barn on 84 acres of preserved farm fields and woods two miles east of Old Fort along Route 45. Her family has held the land since 1862, when Shirley's great-great-grandfather James Grove bought 102 acres and began farming.

Shirley grew up in the house. She married Dale Rossman in a wedding at the farm. Rossman grew up on a nearby farm and still works the fields, now planted with oats, corn and soybeans. It's difficult to imagine a stronger connection to the land than that of Shirley and Dale Rossman.

### Surrounded by Fields

They raised three children here. The house has a music room where Shirley taught lessons, and views of the fields stretching to the north, east and west. Most of the fields they see are theirs and their view is mostly fields, except for a few commercial buildings on Route 45.



Dale and Shirley Rossman preserved their Century Farm in 2016.

They want the farmland to stay that way, and in 2016 preserved the land with a conservation easement held by the Centre County Farmland Trust.

Continued on pg. 2

# CCFT Turns 30!

## Milestones Celebrated at June Event



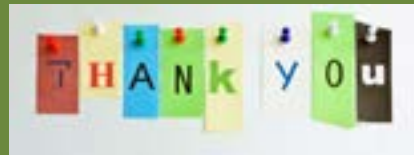
First easement: Hodge Farm

**T**he Centre County Farmland Trust marked 30 years since its 1994 founding at its June appreciation picnic, thanking donors

essential to preserve and protect farmland and open land in central Pennsylvania.

"We are celebrating land preservation in the Centre region, our connections to and love of the land, and especially our donors, volunteers and supporters — without which this organization would not exist," says CCFT President Dan Guss.

Continued on pg. 6



**D**onors who gave to preserve farmland May 8-9 during the Centre Gives community online giving event raised \$10,648.27 to fuel our conservation work. Thank you.

Our Centre Gives donors are part of:

- an inspiring community-giving event.
- investing in the quality of life we enjoy here.
- knowing every donated dollar helps CCFT raise more thanks to Centre Gives stretch pools. Donations: \$9,470. Our final total: \$10,648.27. Thank you Centre Gives!





## *Dale and Shirley Rossman's preserved Century Farm (continued...)*

“Family is important,” says Shirley, explaining their decision to preserve the land. The easement means the family’s farmland cannot be developed. To the Rossmans, the easement represents a way to keep the land in the family and farmed the way it has been for generations — and as Shirley and Dale’s children, Carol, Terry and Gary, remember it throughout their lives.

“That means a lot to our kids,” says Shirley.

Dale and Shirley have both noticed the conversion of farmland into housing developments in the area. One is on Sinking Creek Road near Route 144. Others are nearby on Route 45, though not within view from the house.

“We didn’t want houses put on it,” says Dale. “Down the road, if they keep selling farms off for development, where is the food going to come from?”

### **Century Farm**

The Rossman Farm is a Pennsylvania-designated Century Farm, which means it’s been owned by the same family for at least 100 consecutive years and a family member still resides on the farm.

James Grove, who purchased the 100 acres in 1862, left the farm to his son, Thomas, and Thomas passed it down to his son, Whitmer (Shirley’s grandfather). Whitmer gave the land to his daughter Emma (Shir-

ley’s mother) and two adjoining farms to his sons Tom Grove and Harrison Grove.

The Rossmans gave each of their children an acre of land to build a house. Their sons built and live in each of their two houses. Their daughter did not build there and lives on an adjacent farm.

### **Fields, Woodland & Memories**

About 10 acres of the property is woodland. Sixteen acres are planted in corn, eight in oats and 32 acres in soybeans.

The land is within the Sinking Creek and larger Penns Creek watershed. Its scenic frontage on the north side of Route 45 helps maintain the beautiful landscape and agricultural character along the Route 45 corridor.

Shirley and Dale celebrated their 69<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary June 8. For their wedding in 1955, Shirley’s father renovated the two-story house into a 1.5-story bungalow.

Her job, Shirley recalls, was to pound the nails out of walnut boards so they could be used to finish the house renovation in time.

She is proud of her family’s history and ties to the land, full of memories of raising St. Bernard dogs for sale, rabbits for meat and chickens for meat and eggs.



# Summer Thank You Picnic

The Centre County Farmland Trust thanked donors and supporters with barbecue, art, birthday cake and wine at its annual Summer Solstice Thank You Picnic at Mount Nittany Vineyard and Winery on the warm, sunny evening of June 19.

Members of the Farmland Preservation Artists of Central Pennsylvania including Jen Shuey (right) painted among the winery's beautiful grounds and displayed finished pieces in the Tasting Room.

CCFT celebrated 30 years with a cake created by Delectable Delights by Heather Luse. Erin Condo McCracken (below, center) of EcoVents catered. RIGHT, center: Trustee Catherine Smith (left) with easement donors Carol and Pete Schempf (center) and former Trustee Walt Whitmer. Pete Schempf is also a former CCFT president.

Donors, volunteer Trustees and supporters make our farmland preservation work possible.







LEFT, top: Jen Shuey with her appreciation gift — a painting of a familiar scene from Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts by artist Brienne Brown. CCFT presented the painting to Shuey at the June 19 picnic in recognition of her decade-long volunteer service as a CCFT Trustee, including as President and Treasurer.

LEFT, center: Trustee Bob Potter and artist Brienne Brown, member of the Farmland Preservation Artists of Central Pennsylvania.

LEFT, bottom: Bob Potter with CCFT supporters, (left to right): Barbara Grignano, Ann Barton, Chris Murphy and Dennis Murphy.

RIGHT, bottom: Plein Air and Farmland Preservation Artist Susan Nicholas Gephart, working her magic on canvas beside the pond.

RIGHT, top: Ice-cold refreshments, including wine, beer and a non-alcoholic cranberry spritzer, were welcome on a steamy June evening.

Thank you CCFT supporters! See you in June 2025!







**Images, page 2: View from Route 45.**  
**Page 5, TOP: Fields, ridges and grapevines.**  
**RIGHT, top to bottom: The barn; Oats field and woodland; The Rossmans' proud heritage and preservation on display.**



*Rossmans' Preserved Century Farm (cont...)*

She is happy to show items like the heavy, cast iron cannonball found on the land and a big album of collected family photographs, including a printed invitation to the wedding of her grandparents Whitmer and Emma (on Christmas Day, 1900) and news clippings bound within covers of thick wood.

**Community Help after Barn Fire**

The white barn with black trim is new, built in 2009 to replace the original barn destroyed by fire on a Saturday night that March. Neighbors gathered Monday morning to help clean up. “The following Saturday, you wouldn’t know a barn had been there. It was all cleaned up,” Dale recalls.

Over the next six weeks, local carpenters helped build a new barn on the same spot. When their day ended at 3:30, the family and neighbors who came to help would keep working until dark.

The white barn now bears the years 1862 — when the Grove family first acquired the land — and 2009, the year the old barn burned and the family and community rebuilt the barn, for hopefully many more years of service to this farm family.

### Executive Committee

**Dan Guss ~ President**

danguss@comcast.net

**Nancy VanLandingham ~ VP**

nancy@nancyvl.com

**Linda Friend ~ Secretary**

lindafriend.psu@gmail.com

**Myra Sletson ~ Treasurer**

mysletson@gmail.com

~

**Derek Canova**

derek1kbb@msn.com

**Franklin Egan**

franklin@regenall.org

**Larry Hutchinson**

Hutch197@comcast.net

**Beth Kelly**

bmtoma24@yahoo.com

**Dave Litke**

dav600@comcast.net

**Bob Potter**

rwp204@icloud.com

**Catherine Smith**

smithcath@ecu.edu

**Martha Taylor**

Liaison to the Farmland  
Preservation Artists of Central PA

ladyfinger18@aol.com

## CCFT Looks to Preserving Next 440 Acres

The Centre County Farmland Trust's work with owners of three farms is close to securing conservation easements to protect the land and its natural resources from development.

If all goes well, the Trust and landowners will preserve 440 acres in the next six months, says CCFT President Dan Guss.

"We've turned a corner," he says. In the last few years, the Trust has invested in organizational capacity, strategic

planning and digital systems.

"These preparations are starting to pay off and we can now look forward to preserving more land," says Guss.

Landowners sacrifice development rights to their land to establish a conservation easement. CCFT pays the cost of executing the easement — about \$10,000 to \$20,000 per property — then visits the land annually to maintain the easement.



## CCFT Celebrates 30th Anniversary (cont.)



nonprofit land trust that could partner with landowners who did not require compensation to preserve their land. Landowners essentially "donate" a conservation easement as they waive development rights to their land.

After 10 years of groundwork, CCFT preserved the Hodge Farm in 2004. Left to right: Then-president Bob Anderson, with the late Barbara and Hugh Hodge.

### Preservation Mechanism

E. Lynn Miller and William Keough co-founded CCFT in 1994. Both served on Centre County's Agricultural Land Preservation Board, created in 1989 to run Pennsylvania's new ag preservation program in Centre County. Keough chaired that board until 2014.

Frustrated that landowner interest in preservation exceeded available funds to compensate farmers for their land, they envisioned another way to preserve farmland here: A

### A decade of preparation

CCFT would need a decade of groundwork before preserving its first farm: The 150-acre Hodge Farm in Penn Township. Since then, thanks to former executive directors Norm Lathbury and Sarah Walter, and volunteer leaders including Bob Anderson, Pete Schempf, Jennifer Shuey and Dan Guss, CCFT has preserved and maintains 17 easements over 1,483 acres.

Recently, as CCFT's work grew beyond county government's available support, volunteer Trustees steered through a reorganization with help from a bequest from Miller, who died in 2020, and a capacity-building grant from the Hamer Foundation.



## Keep in Touch!

Follow

@centrecountyfarmlandtrust

on Instagram and Facebook

E-mail

administration@centrecounty  
farmlandtrust.org

Visit on the Web

centrecountyfarmlandtrust.org

Call

814- 264- 2766

Newsletter produced by  
Lisa Duchene,  
Polished Oak Communications